

COSTA RICA DISCOVERED



Itinerary San Jose (3), Punta Leona (2), Manuel Antonio (1), San Jose (1)

DAY 1 SAN JOSE Journey to beautiful Costa Rica! You'll arrive in the cosmopolitan capital city of San José, altitude 3,770 feet above sea level, where your private bus and driver will escort you to your hotel.

DAY 2 SAN JOSE Visit the awesome Irazu Volcano with its ravaged "lunar" landscape. Costa Rica's highest volcano offers a bird's eye view from the top at 11,300 feet. It is said that you can see both the Atlantic and the Pacific from the summit. On the way you'll make a stop in Costa Rica's former capital city of Cartago to visit the Basilica that honors Costa Rica's patron saint, La Negrita.

DAY 3 SAN JOSE Discover the bustling, energetic city on a San José City Tour. See Rohrmoser, a charming residential area and home to many embassies; the Teatro Nacional, built in 1897 with funds from a self-imposed coffee tax; the Museo Nacional, where you can still see the bullet holes in the turrets from the 1948 civil war. Later visit the suburb of Moravia, a town famous for fine leather craftsmanship and excellent souvenirs.

DAY 4 PUNTA LEONA Transfer to Punta Leona over the western mountain chain and down to the Pacific lowlands, passing extensive coffee farms and sugar cane plantations. Visit Carara National Park for a short nature hike. This important biological reserve is a transition zone between the last remaining stands of tropical dry forest in northwestern Costa Rica and the wet dry forests to the south. The park harbors an abundance of wildlife including the famous scarlet macaw, ocelots, monkeys, armadillos and the elusive two-toed sloth. *Options:* (1) Take a Tortuga Island Cruise to a tropical island for an afternoon of snorkeling, swimming and a delicious buffet lunch. (2) The Crocodile Safari offers a boat ride up the Tarcoles River and into the heart of crocodile territory. This is a great adventure for birdwatchers and for taking up-close photos of some very large reptiles.

DAY 5 PUNTA LEONA Enjoy a free day to bask on the white sand beaches of one of the most beautiful areas in Costa Rica. Or use the day to explore the

ecosystems, flora and fauna of Punta Leona, a paradise where the Pacific ocean meets the tropical rain forest. The nests of scarlet macaws here are protected from poachers to help this endangered bird population expand. All your senses come alive when you enter this fragrant climate. Once you walk through this lovely place, you won't find it difficult to believe that the motion picture "1492" was filmed on location here. The movie recounts the wonder of Christopher Columbus arriving in the New World.

DAY 6 MANUEL ANTONIO Put on your hiking boots and trek through Manuel Antonio National Park. The park, one of the smallest in the country, is the area's crowning glory. It sits along the Pacific Coast and boasts an estuary, mangroves, a lagoon, beaches and winding paths. Take a walk through the tropical forest and find mosses, ferns, flowers and epiphytes growing thickly on every tree. Keep your eyes open for a glimpse of the rare squirrel monkeys, howler monkeys, two-toed sloths and coatimundis that make this lovely protected area their home.

DAY 7 SAN JOSE En route to San José, pass through the town of Sarchi, home of the famous Sarchi Oxcart Factory where you can watch the artisan hand-paint the oxcarts. These highly skilled craftsmen also produce wonderful bowls, plates, furniture and walking sticks. This is a great chance to pick up some last minute souvenirs. Continue to San José to enjoy your last evening in Costa Rica. This city with its nearly perfect climate, modern surroundings and warm, friendly residents has lured many travelers to stay and call it home. Option: Share dinner with a Costa Rican family in their home tonight and learn firsthand why Ticos always seem to have smiles for their visitors — what an excellent way to end your stay!

DAY 8 DEPART Jet home with fabulous memories of your exciting discovery of Costa Rica!

Highlights

- Irazu Volcano
- San Jose City Tour
- Carrara National Park
- Manuel Antonio National Park
- Sarchi

Options

- Tortuga Island Cruise
- Crocodile Safari Tour
- Dinner with a Costa Rican Family